

An approach of the European higher education framework to the management of higher education at university level in Peru

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Abstract

This communication research gives an insight to University Education in Peru and a brief review of the main European documents that deal with the European Higher Education Framework, highlighting the principles upon which it is based, as well as the strategic objectives that it sets forth and the tools to achieve them.

The purpose of this process is to adapt our university education management in Peru to the EEES, seeking to identify the limitations and constraints faced with regard to the keys of European convergence and the means or instruments that we have in order to attain convergence in Peru.

Keywords: European higher education framework, university management, European convergence, University Education in Peru.

1. Introduction

In the case of Peru, there is an archipelago of universities and some common development trends can be identified among them. These are important for understanding the obstacles or limitations to which the management of university education is subject in Peru with regard to the approaching the European space for higher education.

One, widespread proliferation of different types of institutions of higher education, both universities and non-university institutions, whose enrollment ranges from over 20 thousand students to less than a thousand; public universities that are somewhat financially dependent on the state, private universities with government subsidies and private ones with no state support whatsoever; complete institutions with regard to coverage of areas of knowledge or, at the other extreme, institutions specialized in a single area, such as education, medicine or engineering; universities dedicated solely to undergraduate education or with increasing emphasis on graduate studies, research, etc. In summary, according to the latest information available, the number of universities throughout Peru has grown. They currently number 100, including 32 public and 68 private universities.²

Two, according to Brunner (2008) there is a strong and growing presence of private universities that do not depend on state financing and compose the majority within the institutional platform of university education, accounting for approximately 22% of total enrollment in Peru, with enrollment in public universities accounting for the other 78%. It is a dense, non-governmental network of institutions and interests, of faculty and students, of investments and projects, of economic and social capital, of mass services and social niche services in the higher education market, which today extends from north to south and from east to west, giving a peculiar mixed and heterogeneous characteristic to university education in Peru³.

Three, and as a result of the aforementioned dynamics, an intensely differentiated university education, both horizontally and vertically, whose structure and services diversify continually, in the same measure that institutions seek to increase and broaden their student recruitment and expand their coverage of areas of knowledge, creating new programs, new locations and new certificates for the purpose.

Four, due to the historic evolution of the education system and national policies, there is a predominance with regard to the main public universities, represented symbolically by *Universidad de San Marcos*, which throughout its history, in its position at the peak of the state subsystem, has accumulated the benefit of fiscal subsidies and the prestige associated with its track record of producing the most reputable professions. In contrast, with few exceptions, private institutions still struggle to obtain a modicum of social recognition in a market that has a strong tendency to reward traditions and capital.

Five, in general, the development of academic research in the national systems is weak and concentrated in a few universities, most of which are public, although there is also a small nucleus of private universities involved. In general, the human resources involved in the work of producing science and technology are few and they are concentrated precisely in this group of universities. According to the *Academic Ranking of World Universities* (ARWU) for the year 2009 and the *SCImago Journal and Country Rank* for 2009, five universities in Brazil, two in Chile, one in Argentina and one in Mexico are in the ranking, with two of them ranking between 101 and 200, one between 201 and 300, one between 301 and 400 and the rest in the lowest fifth percentile, between 401 and 500. Peru is not listed in the ranking⁴.

Six, there is considerable tension between legitimacy and effectiveness of the government of Peruvian universities, which has sometimes been described as one of its most noteworthy characteristics. While the predominant model of government at the majority of public universities is one inspired by the principles of the Cordoba reform of 1918, consisting of holding elections (among faculty, students, non-academic employees and, on occasion, graduates) to vote for candidates who will compose the individual and collective management of these institutions, at private universities a more business-like form of organization and management tends to prevail. For this reason, public universities tend to face chronic problems related to effectiveness with regard to their management and, depending on the circumstances in the national context, they may face over-politicization of problems regarding legitimacy. In contrast, the government of private universities frequently experiences a deficit of academic legitimacy and, with regard to management, may encounter problems with the motivation of faculty members.

2. The Bologna Declaration

The Bologna Declaration is a pledge by 29 countries to reform the structures of their higher education systems in a convergent manner.

The Bologna process is intended to create convergence. Therefore, it is not a path towards the standardization or uniformization of European higher education; the fundamental principles of autonomy and diversity are respected.

³ BRUNNER, José Joaquín. *Educación Superior en América Latina: elementos para un enfoque comparativo* (Higher Education in Latin America: elements for a comparative approach) . www.brunner.cl. June 2008

⁴ See <http://www.arwu.org/> y <http://www.scimagojr.com/index.php>

The systems are facing common internal and external challenges related to the growth and diversification of higher education, the employability of graduates, a shortage of skills in key areas, the expansion of private and transnational education, etc.

A crucial aspect of the Bologna Declaration is that it is a commitment to the principle of European higher education through growing cooperation among institutions.

The Bologna Declaration sets forth six specific objectives, which are the following:

- a) Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of a Diploma Supplement, in order to foster the employability of European citizens, and the international competitiveness of the European higher education;
- b) Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful conclusion of the first cycle of studies, which must last at least three years. The degree awarded upon completion of the first cycle must also be relevant to the European labor market with an appropriate qualification level. The second cycle must lead to a master's degree and/or doctorate, as in many European countries.
- c) Establishment of a system of credits - as in the ECTS system -, as an appropriate way of promoting the most extensive student mobility. Credits may also be acquired in non-university contexts, including continuing education, provided that they are recognized by the universities enrolling the students.
- d) Promotion of mobility, overcoming obstacles to free mobility, paying particular attention to:
 - For students, access to opportunities for studies, training and related services;
 - For faculty members, researchers and administrative personnel, recognition and statutory rights
- e) Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance, with a view to developing comparable methodologies and criteria
- f) Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly in relation with curricular development, interinstitutional cooperation, mobility schemes and integrated study, training and research programs (European Union 1999).

3. Adaptation to Bologna in the management of university education in Peru

The management of university education in Peru presents structural, organizational and operational obstacles to convergence in the manner that European systems are converging under the impulse of the Bologna process (Brunner 2008), but it is not alien to this context and for insertion in such a competitive scenario, it is necessary to determine strategies that lead to overcoming these challenges. For this purpose, the obstacles or limitations that Peruvian universities need to overcome in relation with the keys to European convergence and the means or instruments we have or can count on to attain it must be identified.

Strategic objectives of the EEES in the management of university education in Peru, and means or instruments for the management of higher education in Peru

Strategic objectives of the EEES	Obstacles or limitations in the management of university education in Peru	Means or instruments
<u>First objective:</u> System of easily readable and comparable degrees	Differences among IHE: technological institutions* and state and private universities, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, in virtue of Legislative Decree No. 882 which promotes investment in education. Differences in degrees and titles awarded on behalf of the nation.	Law 23733: Law on Universities Chapter I: General Provisions Article 4 and subsequent articles Chapter III: Studies and degrees, and its amendment Legislative Decree No. 739 ⁵ .
<u>Second objective:</u> Adoption of a system based on two main cycles, undergraduate	It is a system based on an undergraduate program basically lasting 5 years. Graduate studies are optional and not offered directly by the university. Differences in length, tuition and desirability on the part	Establishment in universities of two academic levels 5-year undergraduate level with professional qualifications in the labor market and a second graduate level, the attainment of which implies suc

⁵ See http://transparencia.unitru.edu.pe/doc/Law_23733.pdf

and graduate	of students.	completion of the first level, with the possibility of earning a Master's degree and/or Doctorate in a 2-year program.
<u>Third objective:</u>	System of academic credits defined by each university charter, based on content and ordinarily, the hours of theory and practice classes taught in the course.	An integrated competence-based rather than content-based curriculum, which instead of placing value on the hours a student spends in class, assesses the 'volume of work' that a student must complete to achieve the academic objectives.
Establishment of a system of credits	Differences in class hours (45 or 50 minutes) and minimum length of a semester, 15 or 17 weeks, and the number of semesters per year.	Changes in the curriculum and in academic programs permit consideration of students' learning.
<u>Fourth objective:</u>	The grading scale, especially with regard to the minimum passing grade.	In order to enhance the mobility of the EEES, a accreditation document provided by the universities must be used to achieve transparency of degrees and to make common labor market possible. This document will be provided upon request by the interested party, of official degrees, and would be valid throughout the national territory.
Mobility	Each university has its own system mainly based on the excellence of its teaching and research, as well as the international agreements that it is able to enter into as an institution.	This document would have standard personal information on each university degree, on the degree taken, the grades obtained, the professional career acquired and the level of degrees obtained.
<u>Fifth objective:</u>	This is based on the autonomy of the university, requires cooperation from the authorities, faculty and administrative staff for a transnational education, and has effects on financing.	Attain higher levels of quality and transparency in university education and university management.
Quality assurance	Different admission and graduation systems.	Law No. 28740 (May 2006) created the SINEACE body for universities is the CONEAU, which will carry out assessment and certification of university quality ⁶ .
<u>Sixth objective:</u>	Responsibility of higher education.	Establishment of a University Reform Coordination Commission (CCRU) by the National Congress of the Republic. The CCRU is working on a new proposal on universities that would change the management of universities to a University Education System by taking into account the university structure established in 1983 (Sánchez' Law) ⁷ in which a joint vision of cooperation among the different types of universities is proposed. ⁸
European dimension in higher education	The legal framework is the Law on Universities in force, No. 23733 passed in 1983. ANR (National Assembly of Rectors) whose purposes include the study, coordination and general guidance of university activities. It oversees compliance with university legislation. The Ministry of Education coordinates secondary education with requirements for university admission. The CONAFU was created by Law No.26439. For the creation of new universities and Legislative Decree No. 882.	

4. Conclusions

- The results obtained for the six objectives analyzed are a starting point for determining strategies.
- The institutions dedicated to providing university education must gear the creation and production of knowledge toward the country's real requirements, considering the rapid advances or incidents of the globalized world environment. (Ferrer 2004)
- University management has an impact on society, due to the fact that a university is an organization of higher education that leads in knowledge and science. Society views universities as a reference in the event of

⁶ See <http://www.cqfperu.org/0Descargas/SISTECEREQF/LeySINEACE.pdf>

⁷ Doctoral thesis by **Leonardo Sánchez Ferrer. 1996.** See

[<http://www.march.es/ceacs/ingles/publicaciones/tesis/tesis12.asp>]

⁸ See [<http://www.unmsm.edu.pe/reforma/legislauniversitariaperu.php>]

phenomena, situations and/or occurrences of a political, cultural, scientific, humanistic or social nature. Therefore, they must create trust in the society based on their efficiency, effectiveness and quality. (Ferrer 2004)

- University education in Peru is subject to strong, centrifugal trends, a tendency toward diversification of its form and variation regarding organizational principles and pressure due to competition. For this reason, greater homogeneity must be sought, increasing associative and cooperation capacity.
- Peru faces new challenges and current trends in higher education and it is worrying that the worst results are found in the public schools (primary and secondary level), as that means that education is not meeting expectations regarding upward social mobility, making university degrees at two academic levels necessary, the 5-year undergraduate level for professional qualifications in the labor market and a second graduate level, whose attainment implies successful completion of the first, with the possibility of earning a Master's degree and/or Doctorate in a program lasting 2 + 1 years.
- A latent concern stems from the quality and pertinence of higher education. Although there is no direct, solid evidence that permits a conclusion to be drawn in this regard, one might ask whether the expansion of the supply has been able to at least maintain an acceptable level of quality. In light of rapid expansion of the supply and demand, the country urgently requires an effective, efficient system for accreditation of educational quality. Sights are on the *Sistema Nacional de Evaluación, Acreditación y Certificación de la Calidad Educativa* (SINEACE / National System for the Assessment, Accreditation and Certification of Educational Quality) and the *Consejo de Evaluación y Certificación de la Calidad de la Educación Superior Universitaria* (CONEAU / Council on Assessment and Certification of the Quality of University Education).
- Academic mobility is incipient, despite evidence of the importance of experience acquired by students returning from studying at universities in the countries selected. The internationalization of higher education will necessarily include the following issues: accreditation processes and criteria, confidence in cooperation, identical quality assessment standards, and recognition of degrees and titles. All of these topics will permit more and better comparability and compatibility between educational systems, which will result in greater mobility among students, in a policy that tends toward convergence.

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